

## MEMORANDUM

August 27, 2009

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Historic District Commission

SUBJECT: **HDC2009-00470** 23 Paca Place, Hungerford  
Recommendation for Historic District re-zoning

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### Recommendation by Historic District Commission

The Historic District Commission (HDC) recommended that the property and house at 23 Paca Place in Hungerford be designated as a local historic district through the City's Map Amendment process by re-zoning the property from R-60 to R-60 HD. The HDC noted that it met Criteria I-B [Person: identified with Donald Gingery, a major figure in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century suburban development of Rockville, including Hungerford Towne] and I-C [Pattern of Events: associated with the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century suburban development of Rockville]; and II-A [Design/Construction: exemplifies the modern mass produced housing developed after World War II, with stylistic affinity with Twinbrook, and Levittown, NY. The property has a high level of integrity, reflecting integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

### Evaluation of Historic Significance by the Historic District Commission

The Historic District Commission (HDC) considered the proposed Evaluation of Historic Significance at its July 16, 2009 meeting. The proposed historic district evaluation concerns a single-family residence in the R-60 zone in Hungerford, originally known as "Hungerford Towne." Evaluation of Historic Significance was brought to the HDC in response to the filing of a demolition permit by the owner on April 27, 2009. The owner of the property lives in Bethesda, and has owned this property for approximately five years. She expressed interest in demolishing the existing house to build a new home, and has been working with Stanley Martin Custom Homes.

The Evaluation was initially scheduled for June 18, 2009, but was postponed until July at the request of the owner's agent via phone and email. The Evaluation was then posted for July 16, 2009 but the owner's agent again requested a continuance via email on July 13<sup>th</sup>. However, on July 16<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 pm, the owner requested that the HDC conduct its evaluation. Staff had not removed the lawn-sign, and had only just posted a revised agenda. Staff phoned the one neighbor who had called and provided them with an update. Because of the late-dated requests, and the fact that official noticing had been undertaken the week prior to the hearing, as required, staff agreed with the owner to proceed with the HDC evaluation. The HDC received comments at the meeting from planning staff and the owner.

The HDC reviews staff research and recommendations and makes its evaluation according to the adopted Criteria for Historic Designation (see page 3). This review is restricted to historic consideration. The HDC does not consider building condition, costs for rehabilitation, or future proposed uses in their deliberation. Such issues would be considered at future dates by the Historic District Commission, the Planning Commission and/or the Mayor and Council.

## **Background**

A significant amount of survey work, research and analysis of post-World War II housing development in Rockville was undertaken by City staff during the development of the 2009 Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan. This information provided the basis for the staff analysis of the historic significance of 23 Paca Place because of the involvement of the same developer, with the same development pattern, and with the same house design. The Twinbrook community considered the creation of a local historic district as well as a conservation district, but decided against this. The HDC reviewed the proposal before them, which was for the designation of a single site that represented a larger pattern of events.

## **Discussion by the Historic District Commission**

*July 16, 2009:* Staff presented the research about Hungerford Towne, Donald Gingery (developer), and the “Levittown Ranch” architectural style that was selected for 23 Paca Place. The entire neighborhood is consistent and illustrative of this largescale suburban development pattern, although there have been numerous alterations over time at individual homes.

The HDC noted that, should this property be designated as historic, alterations would be possible but they would be reviewed by the HDC for compatibility with the property and the neighborhood. The Mayor and Council has adopted significant guidance for the HDC to use when considering proposed alterations to historic sites, to provide for compatible additions/alterations that focus on preservation of significant historic features and the environmental setting.

Commissioner Tucker concurred with the staff report. Commissioner McCool noted that she had lived in a house in Twinbrook and made significant renovations to make it more livable. Chair van Balgooy noted that it has always been difficult to evaluate more recent homes. He noted that not very long ago, bungalows and Victorian homes were torn down as lacking historic significance. He noted that energy efficiency can be achieved in older homes, and that “property rights” applies to the neighbors as well, in consideration of the impacts of demolition on the overall community.

## **Historic District Commission motion**

Therefore, on a motion by Commissioner Tucker, seconded by Commissioner Moloney and with Chair van Balgooy voting in favor, and with Commissioner McCool voting against, the Historic District Commission recommended historic district designation of the property at 23 Paca Place, citing Criteria I-B and I-C, and II-A. [Commissioner Powell was absent.]

cc: Ms. Eva Chow, owner  
Planning Commission

## HISTORIC DESIGNATION CRITERIA

***The Historic District Commission (HDC) uses the following checklist to assist it in evaluating the significance of nominated multi-resource and single-site historic districts. Standing structures and sites, including archaeological sites, must be determined to be significant in one or more of the following criteria to be found eligible for designation:***

### **I. Historical and cultural significance:**

- A. Event: Is the site of a significant historic event
- B. ► Person: Is identified with a person or a group of persons who influenced society
- C. ► Pattern of Events: Exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the County and its communities
- D. Has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, County, State, Nation

### **II. Architectural and design significance:**

- A. ► Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction
- B. Represents the work of a master
- C. Possesses high artistic values
- D. Represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction
- E. Represents an established or familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape

#### **Historic Integrity of structure and site:**

"Substantially Altered" (basic shape, original façade plan, windows and doors have been obscured or changed)

Minor alterations (porch removal or enclosure, roof material replacement, siding added over old siding, basic mass and fenestration intact)

Original or near original condition (all changes reversible)

Outbuildings present and recognizable

► Original site and setting largely preserved (lot size, environmental character trees, setbacks, streetscape)

**Level of site significance:** Local; State; National